

a marketing strategy, cans are provided with a diameter slightly smaller than the typical beverage can, for example about 2 inches in diameter as opposed to about 2.5 inches for a typical beverage can, then it will be appreciated that substitution of such typical beverage cans by competitors can be prevented by making the clearance provided by the supports 22a sufficient to accommodate only the smaller diameter cans.

It will be appreciated by those in the industry that one beverage can is often substituted in the cooler space of another in the keen competition for shelf space. Therefore, providing a restrictive clearance with the lengths of the supports 22a is a marketing advantage to the supplier of beverages in such smaller-diameter cans in that it prevents competitor's substitution of larger cans.

Moreover, it has already been pointed out that the rearward spacing of the panel structure at 28 from the lip 34 provides the front-to-rear clearance in the downward direction at the front 24 that permits goods to be lifted off vertically from behind the lip 34 of the panel structure at 30. Therefore, the rearward spacing of the panel structure from the lip 34 can be sized relative to the smaller-than-usual product size preferably in addition to but also alternatively to the clearance provided by the supports 22a, as before described, it being understood that finger room to lift items out at the front 24 also is desirable.

The front panel 40 can carry indicia of the items to be stocked behind it. Such indicia can be fixed as part of a marketing system for smaller-than-usual cans, for example, but also can be variable. In either case, the front panel will be at the inside of the glass door of the visi-cooler, as described above, for conspicuous display of its indicia.

When the shelf structure is used as preferred in a walk-in cooler that has a space between the inside of its glass door and the fronts of its shelves, the shelf structure can be placed so that a ridge on the front of one of the cooler shelves is between the second, rearward pair of rods 27b. This will put the front panel 40 into the space between the shelf of the walk-in cooler and the inside of its closed glass door for more prominent display of the indicia thereon, visual sight of the items behind the front panel and clear vertical access to the items behind the front panel in the space between the front panel and the rearwardly spaced front 12 of the shelf. Further, this takes advantage of the space for additional increase of the shelf area in the walk-in cooler.

The shelf area in either a visi-cooler or a walk-in cooler is increased because the shelf structure requires only a minimum space for the vertical clearance between its shelf 16 and the shelf of the cooler. This is augmented by designing the shelf structure in a system with particular items, such as the smaller-than-usual diameter cans described above but also is a consequence of the system.

Such a system further contemplates, as is usually the case, that there is enough vertical clearance at least in total between the goods on vertically successive shelves in a cooler and its shelves to accommodate at least one shelf structure of the type described. This permits the addition of the shelf structure and its additional items to the cooler without substituting for or even displacing any of the goods already therein merely by arranging the pre-existing shelves of the cooler closer together for providing vertical clearance for the shelf structure and placing the goods that had been on one of the shelves of the cooler or a glide rack thereon in the same glide rack on the shelf of the shelf structure as described above. The cooperation in such a system of the minimum clearance of the shelf structure and the smaller-than-usual items therefor is apparent.

Those in the art will appreciate that the above effect is usually achieved easily, because of different heights of goods on the preexisting shelves of a cooler. By arranging these goods by height in an efficient manner, the space above uniformly sized goods on a shelf can be used to accommodate the shelf structure described herein directly or, more likely, by adjusting the relative vertical positions of the pre-existing shelves in the cooler. This also cooperates with a modular concept of the system.

It will be appreciated that nothing has been said above about the relative widths of the pre-existing shelf structure in a cooler or other structure on which the disclosed shelf structure is used. It may be that, as a rule, the shelf structure cannot be wider than the pre-existing cooler shelf for which it is intended, but it can be narrower. When it is narrower than the pre-existing cooler shelf, taller goods on that shelf can be retained on the pre-existing shelf while the shelf structure is inserted under shorter goods. The shelf structure then doubles the pre-existing shelf area it covers. Therefore, there is advantage in having the disclosed shelf structure in modules of widths less than the widths of the pre-existing cooler shelves on which they may be used. A single module or lateral combination of modules can then be used to leave a lateral space on the pre-existing shelf for taller goods and/or more than one of the shelf structure modules laterally side by side on a cooler shelf can utilize the full width of the cooler shelf.

In a marketing system, the goods already on pre-existing shelves of a cooler can be inspected to find a space above shorter goods. A shelf structure of one or more modules can then be assembled to have the same width as taken up on the pre-existing cooler shelf by the shorter goods and the shelf structure inserted thereunder or under the shelf above. The shorter goods then remain and additional items such the four files of cans suggested above can be inserted thereunder or above. Because goods on a pre-existing cooler shelf are retained, nothing is lost, but thanks to the system, additional shelf space for additional items is provided by the disclosed shelf structure.

I claim:

1. In one of a cooler, visi-cooler, walk-in cooler and glass-door cooler having fixed or adjustable shelves, the improvement comprising:

a shelf structure on or under one of the shelves, wherein the shelf structure comprises:

a front rod-like member (10a) and at least one other rod-like member (10b, 10c) rearwardly spaced from the front rod-like member (10a) and, together with the front rod-like member (10a), defining a first plane (16);

a framework (22b) defining a second plane; and

at least one support (22a) connecting at least the front rod-like member (10a) and the framework (22b), wherein at least a portion of the framework (22b) extends at least forward of a projection of the front rod-like member (10a) thereon with a stop (34) in a direction from the second plane with at least a component toward the first plane (16).

2. The shelf structure according to claim 1, and further comprising at least one member connecting the front and other rod-like members.

3. The shelf structure according to claim 1, wherein the at least one support comprises legs extending from opposite ends of the front and other rod-like members.

4. The shelf structure according to claim 2, wherein the at least one support comprises legs extending from opposite ends of the front and other rod-like members.

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For the purpose of the present study, the data were collected from the following sources:

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